

## HEALTH ADVISORY ON CATCHING AND EATING FISH

### INTERIM SPORT FISH ADVISORY FOR SAN FRANCISCO BAY

The California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) has performed a preliminary review of the data from the 1994 San Francisco Bay pilot study, "Contaminant Levels in Fish Tissue from San Francisco Bay." The results of the study showed elevated levels of chemical contaminants in the fish tissues. Based on these results, OEHHA is issuing an interim consumption advisory covering certain fish species from the bay.

- Adults should limit their consumption of San Francisco Bay sport fish to, at most, two meals per month.\*
- Adults should not eat any striped bass over 35 inches.
- Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, or who are breast-feeding, and children under 6, should not eat more than one meal per month and, in addition, should not eat any meals of large shark (over 24 inches) or large striped bass (over 27 inches).
- This advisory does not apply to salmon, anchovies, herring, and smelt caught in the bay; other ocean caught sport fish; or commercial fish.

This advisory supersedes the existing advisory on striped bass in the bay, but does not revoke the recent advisory issued for the Richmond Harbor Channel Area.

Individuals who follow these interim guidelines will protect themselves from potential adverse effects caused by the levels of the chemicals found in fish by the study. OEHHA scientists also have the following simple suggestions for catching and eating fish from San Francisco Bay: (1) fish in a variety of locations, (2) eat smaller amounts of several species of fish rather than large amounts of a single species that may have a higher level of contamination, (3) clean and gut fish, eat only the fillet portion, (4) skin and trim fat from fish, (5) bake, broil or steam fish on a rack, (6) discard the juices from cooked fish.

This interim consumption advice is being issued due to health concerns based on exposure to sport fish from the bay contaminated with methylmercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins, and pesticides like DDT. The principal effects of concern (from long-term consumption of fish) are possible neurotoxicity to developing fetuses, infants, and small children (e.g., impaired mental and motor development), mainly associated with excessive methylmercury or PCBs exposure, and potential increased risks for cancer due to exposure to PCBs, dioxins, and the pesticides. There is some indication of greater sensitivity of the nervous system in fetuses, infants, and young children. Because of this sensitivity, more restrictive consumption advice is given for young children and pregnant or breast-feeding women who may pass the contamination on to their fetus or child.

Although this advisory is based only on a preliminary review of the data from the study, OEHHA felt it would be prudent to issue interim guidelines at this time. More specific advisories and recommendations will be issued when a thorough evaluation of the study data is completed by OEHHA in conjunction with other public agencies.

More information can be obtained by calling OEHHA at (916) 324-7572.

\* A fish meal for a 154-pound (70 kilogram) person is considered to be an 8 oz. portion of fish prior to cooking. Meal size should be adjusted according to body weight, with roughly 1 ounce of fish per 20 pounds body weight. For a 40-pound child, for example, a fish meal would be 2 ounces of fish.